

Electronic Literature Collection(s)

A few of these terms, although often used in discussing electronic literature, do not apply to any works in volume one of the Collection.

Ambient

Work that plays by itself, meant to evoke or engage intermittent attention, as a painting or scrolling feed would; in John Cayley's words, "*a dynamic linguistic wall-hanging*." Such work does not require or particularly invite a focused reading session.

Animation/Kinetic

Kinetic work is composed with moving images and/or text but is rarely an actual animated cartoon.

Appropriated Texts

When the supply text for a piece is not composed by the authors, but rather collected or mined from online or print sources, it is appropriated. The result of appropriation may be a "*mashup*," a website or other piece of digital media that uses content from more than one source in a new configuration. Appropriation has some relationship to transclusion, a way of including other content (with permission and payment) in Ted Nelson's Xanadu Project hypertext system.

Audio

Any work with an audio component, including speech, music, or sound effects.

Authors from outside North America

One or more of the authors lives permanently outside North America.

CAVE

An immersive, shared virtual reality environment created using goggles and several pairs of projectors, each pair pointing to the wall of a small room. The first CAVE was developed at the University of Illinois at Chicago, which has trademarked the acronym Cave Automatic Virtual Environment (CAVE); some similar virtual environments are referred to using the term "*cave*," not used as an acronym. Works of electronic literature have been made for a cave, most notably at Brown University.

Chatterbot/Conversational Character

A chatterbot is a computer program designed to simulate a conversation with one or more human users, usually in text. Chatterbots sometimes seem to offer intelligent responses by matching keywords in input, using statistical methods, or building models of conversation topic and emotional state. Early systems such as Eliza and Parry demonstrated that simple programs could be effective in many ways. Chatterbots may also be referred to as talk bots, chat bots, simply "*bots*," or chatterboxes.

Children's Literature

By analogy with print, a work directed to an audience of children.

Codework

Codework is a type of creative writing which in some way references or incorporates formal computer languages (C++, Perl, etc.) within the text. The text itself is not necessarily code that will compile or run, though some have added that requirement as a form of constraint.

Collaboration

A work created by more than one person.

Combinatorial

Works where the permutation of possible outputs plays a key role in the composition.

Conceptual

Art in which the concepts or ideas involved are considered the real substance of the work, as opposed to the made art object. Conceptual art may produce a physical manifestation, however. The intangibility of digital creations raises the issue of whether their art is *"really"* the concept and/or code that creates them, and whether their visual presence online is only some form of documentation. Since the visual dimension of a work can further vary with platform, browser, hardware, etc., these questions become acute around issues of preservation and archiving.

Constraint-Based/Procedural

Raymond Roussel and the Oulipo wrote literary works according to formal constraints based on literary features, such as homonymic puns. Beyond the fact that code itself is constraint based, much digital work is also based on formal constraints which may be features of visual, linguistic, or software systems. Procedural programming is based on procedure calls allowing for a modular (re-use) structure. This type of structure is also used to design and code works of online literature.

Critical/Political/Philosophical

By analogy with print, work made with critical, political, or philosophical intent or effect. See *"Hactivist."*

Database

A database is an organized collection of data. The term originated within the computer industry, but its meaning has been broadened by popular use. Within the digital arts, ways of working with a database are often used metaphorically as ways to structure works. Some works do actually involve large relational databases. Often what would be referred to as an anthology or gathering in print may be thought of as a database online.

Documentary

By analogy with print or film, a work intending to document a life, career, or historical occurrence.

Essay/Creative Nonfiction

By analogy with print, a work composed with an intent to be informative, meditative, and/or journalistic.

Fiction

By analogy with print, story-like or narrative elements appear in the work.

Flash

A commercial system particularly useful for vector-based animation. It was first developed and sold by Macromedia; that company has been acquired by Adobe, which currently sells Flash.

Games

In digital gaming, a game played on a general-purpose computer is often called a computer game, while a game played on a console or arcade machine is often called a video game. The importance of a video display and the visual element of these games is acknowledged in the

phrase "*video game*." The term "*computer game*" more easily allows for games which display only text or which use other methods, such as sound or vibration, as their primary feedback device. Video games use some sort of input device, usually in the form of button/joystick combinations (on arcade games), a keyboard and mouse/trackball combination (computer games), a controller (console games), or some combination of these. The computer enforces a certain physics of play and provides incentives such as a score or the ability to defeat opponents. In more open-ended games, or play activities (see "*Wordtoy*"), the player is free to pursue less directed activities in a virtual universe.

Generative

Generative art or media are sometimes referred to as the genetic code of artificial objects, working and producing in unique, unrepeatably ways. In experiencing a generative piece, the reader starts the process that results in the output, as opposed to watching a pre-prepared motion picture or selecting one of several pre-written texts to read.

Hactivist

Indicates programming, modifying digital media, exploiting computer systems, and otherwise working with networked computing to further a political goal, by analogy with other sorts of activism. The term is meant to suggest disruptive senses of "*hacking*" along with activities such as civil disobedience, although particular artists labeled as hactivists may not engage in illegal activities. Related concepts are "*arts activism*" and "*prankstivism*," which refer to works made to further social change.

HTML/DHTML

HyperText Markup Language (HTML) is a format for defining web pages to be displayed in a web browser. HTML is used to structure information - to designate headings, paragraphs, and lists, for instance, as well as hypertextual links - and can be used to describe, to some degree, the appearance and semantics of a document. HTML (and its successor, XHTML) is now an international standard maintained by the World Wide Web Consortium. Dynamic HTML or DHTML is used to refer to interactive web sites that use other technologies in addition to HTML, such as a client-side scripting language (usually JavaScript), and that manipulate pages using Document Object Model and Cascading Style Sheets (CSS).

Hypertext

Hypertext is a user-interface paradigm for displaying documents which, according to an early definition (Ted Nelson, 1970), "branch or perform on request." The most frequently discussed form of hypertext document contains automated cross-references, called hyperlinks, to other documents. Selecting a hyperlink causes the computer to display the linked document within a very short period of time. Hypertext fiction, though not the most prevalent form of e-literature, was the earliest form of e-literature recognized as such.

Inform

Inform is a programming language and design system for interactive fiction originally created by Graham Nelson in 1993.

Installation

A freestanding work in the physical environment, similar to an art installation, that uses programming and/or digital display as critical components of its creation.

Interactive Fiction

Often abbreviated IF, this term describes software simulating environments in which players use text commands to control characters and influence the environment. Works in this form

can be understood as literary narratives and as computer games. In common usage, the word refers to what are also called text adventures, a type of adventure game with text-based input and output.

Java

A software technology from Sun Microsystems that encompasses the Java programming language and the virtual machine on which it runs, which can run inside a web browser. Java programs are cross-platform and come in the form of "applets," if browser-based, or "applications."

JavaScript

A scripting language that has little in common with the similarly-named Java programming language. It runs on the client computer, like Java, but can be embedded throughout web pages. JavaScript is a registered trademark of Sun Microsystems, used under license for technology invented and implemented by Netscape.

Locative

Refers to works that make use of locative technologies, such as GPS, Global Positioning System, a satellite navigation system, or RFID, Radio Frequency Identifiers, as part of their process.

Memoir

By analogy with print, a work drawing on and aiming to convey the experience of an individual person.

Multilingual or Non-English

A work containing multiple languages or composed in a language other than English.

Music

A work including music.

Network Forms

Many works of e-literature reference, are structured like, or make use of the styles of network forms such as the personal home page, the FAQ or Frequently Asked Questions list, the blog, the listserv, the commercial website, the newsfeed, the wiki, the network, or email.

Non-Interactive

The work does not require any interaction from the user or reader beyond accessing it, running it, and perhaps exiting the program. See "Ambient."

Parody/Satire

By analogy with print, work made with satirical or parodic intent or effect.

Performance/Performative

In performance art, the main work is the action of the artist for some interval of time. There is no art object, although performances can be documented. Much digital writing can be seen to be both performance art, when it consists of a one-time online gathering without residue; and performative, when it reflects - and reflects on - an inherent ephemerality in digitality while in fact leaving a semi-permanent cyber-object in its wake.

Place

Place is rethought in many ways in digital works. Issues of displacement, diaspora, positioning by satellite, cyberlocation, and re-understood geo-location are raised by the nature of the online network experience. Some of the work dealing with place references the mid-twentieth century Situationist movement.

Poetry

Writing native to the electronic environment is under continual construction (poiesis) by its creators and receivers. Works of electronic literature are "poietic," in this sense, and are often constructed by strategies analogous to those found in experimental print poetry, or cinema, as well as by strategies native to the digital environment.

Processing

An open source "programming language and integrated development environment (IDE) built for the electronic arts and visual design communities." Processing aims to teach the basics of computer programming in a visual context. It builds on the graphical side of the Java programming language, simplifying features and creating a few new ones.

QuickTime

A multimedia technology developed by Apple Computer, capable of handling various formats of digital video, sound, text, animation, music, and immersive panoramic images.

Shockwave

A cross-platform development system for interactive digital media developed by Macromedia (now Adobe). Shockwave is often used for online game development. It offers a 3D engine rather than the vector-based, scalable graphics of Flash.

Squeak

An implementation of the Smalltalk programming language. Squeak's developers include Alan Kay, who led the group that originally created the Smalltalk programming language in the early 1970s. Squeak is derived from Smalltalk-80. It may be downloaded at no cost and may be freely adapted and distributed.

Storyspace

Storyspace is a hypertext system developed by Jay David Bolter, Michael Joyce, and John B. Smith. Since 1990, the software has been published by Eastgate Systems. Storyspace is a standalone hypertext system. Most fiction published in Storyspace, including classic hypertexts such as *afternoon*, a story by Michael Joyce, and *Patchwork Girl* by Shelley Jackson, is published in Storyspace reader (standalone application) versions. Storyspace also has an export to HTML feature, which some authors have used for web hypertext development.

Stretchtext

A text that can be longer or shorter on demand, as defined by Ted Nelson. Usually mousing over the text will reveal additional interpolated text. This newly surfaced text, moused over in its turn, reveals yet more stretches of text. The user does not ever leave the current page.

TADS

Text Adventure Development System (TADS) is a programming system for creating interactive fiction games. The first version was created by Mike Roberts in 1987.

Textual Instrument

A work written and coded in such a way that it is capable, by analogy with a musical instrument, of playing numerous compositions. The reader is invited to become an expert player of the piece, for skill at manipulating it, above and beyond familiarity with how with its interface works, yields reading and viewing rewards. A closely related idea is that of the instrumental text, where an interface allows manipulations of a particular piece of writing in an interesting way.

Text Movie

This term is generally used to refer to a long flow of self-performing text, which may be "choreographed" to music or driven by some algorithm, that eschews images or most animation of the text itself. Young Hae-Chang Heavy Industries are noted for making text movies that maintain narrative flow, by contrast with "Ambient" work.

3D

A work, generally on a two-dimensional screen, composed to create three-dimensional effects. Three-dimensional effects, except for artists' or pop-up books, are not widely known in print literature, though they are widely used in sculpture, sound installation, and kinetic art.

Time-Based

Works in which the many possible coded timings of the piece itself are composed or manipulated elements of central interest.

Translation

Works in which the process of translation between languages, or between natural languages and code, is referenced, enacted, or otherwise important.

Viral

One of a number of themes, like surveillance, arts activism, and identity, with peculiar digital resonance, pointing as they do to network effects or practice. Viral can also refer to work generated by software emulating bio-evolutionary "Darwinian" algorithms.

Visual Poetry or Narrative

A poetic or narrative work in which the visual component takes a primary role.

VRML

Virtual Reality Modeling Language (VRML, pronounced vermal) is a standard file format for representing 3D interactive vector graphics, designed particularly with the web in mind. It is rarely used now but was popular in the late 1990s.

Women Authors

Works with one or more contributions by women.

Wordtoy

A term used to describe works in which the user is invited to play with an experimental interface in such a way that new textual creations are manufactured during the interaction. The term may also refer to works that invite playful manipulation more than reading.

The Electronic Literature Organization (ELO) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established in 1999 to promote and facilitate the writing, publishing, and reading of electronic literature. Since its formation, the Electronic Literature Organization has worked to assist

writers and publishers in bringing their literary works to a wider, global readership and to provide them with the infrastructure necessary to reach one another.

Source: <http://eliterature.org>

A Web and CD-ROM Publication

The Electronic Literature Collection Volume One has been published (with identical contents) on the web and on CD-ROM. This dual publication is intended to allow the first volume to reach the broadest audience possible and to provide for reading, classroom use, sharing, and reference on and off the network. Anyone can request a free CD-ROM from: Electronic Literature Organization / Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH) / B0131 McKeldin Library / University of Maryland / College Park, MD 20742.

The Volume 1 Collection is available online at:

<http://collection.eliterature.org/1/>

Electronic Literature Organization

To facilitate and promote the writing, publishing, and reading of literature in electronic media.

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